

C.I.A. Reports to Senate Panel on Shooting of Pope

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 18 — The Central Intelligence Agency reported to a Senate committee today about the shooting of Pope John Paul II. There has been concern among members of Congress that the Reagan Administration has not shown adequate interest in determining whether Bulgaria and the Soviet Union played a role in the 1981 assassination attempt.

Several members of the Senate Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, including its chairman, Barry M. Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, and its vice chairman, Daniel Patrick

Moynihan, Democrat of New York, have privately expressed doubts about the C.I.A.'s efforts to investigate Bulgarian connections to Mehmet Ali Agca, the Turk convicted of shooting the Pope, according to committee sources.

After today's briefing of the committee, however, Senator Goldwater said he was satisfied the C.I.A. was pursuing the matter. "I don't think they've been dragging their tail," he said.

Mr. Moynihan also said he had been persuaded by the briefing that the C.I.A. was actively following developments and seemed well informed.

Other committee members, who asked not to be identified, said the C.I.A. had provided no new information about the shooting, leaving the impression, one senator said, "that they're following the case but not very vigorously."

The C.I.A.'s interest in the shooting of the Pope has been questioned in recent weeks. Earlier this month, after an NBC News report that the C.I.A. had tried to discourage investigations into the shooting by the Italian Government and American journalists, William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, met with William P. Clark, the White House national security adviser, to discuss the agency's efforts.

White House officials said Mr. Casey had initiated the discussion to deny the charges and reassure Mr. Clark that the C.I.A. had not impeded any investigations.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz, addressing the Conservative Political Action Conference, said today that the United States had not tried to suppress investigations into the shooting. He added that the Government could not have "a fruitful relationship" with Bulgaria as long as it supported terrorism.

The Senate committee scheduled today's briefing, committee sources said, to learn what the C.I.A. knew about the case and find out what steps the Administration had taken to pursue possible Bulgarian and Soviet involvement. The C.I.A. was represented at the hearing by Robert M. Gates, the head of the agency's intelligence division, and John H. Stein, chief of clandestine operations.

The two officials, according to Mr. Moynihan, told the committee that American efforts to investigate the shooting were constrained by the Italian judicial system in which independent magistrates, acting in effect as grand juries, conduct inquiries without reporting to the Government or its intelligence agencies.

As a result, Mr. Moynihan said, the C.I.A. has been unable to collect information from investigators themselves and has had to rely on assistance from friendly intelligence services in Europe, most of which have only second-hand information about the case.

Mr. Goldwater said, "Since this matter is being handled by the Italians, there's a question about how far you should go in investigating it yourself."

Other committee members, however, criticized the C.I.A.'s efforts. One said, "The agency has not used its resources to trace Agca's background and examine his connections with Bulgaria. The C.I.A. could do that without interfering with the Italians."

After his arrest and conviction, Mr. Agca told Italian authorities that three Bulgarians living in Rome had helped him plan the assassination attempt, according to Italian officials. Last November Italian authorities arrested one of the Bulgarians identified by Mr. Agca, Sergei I. Antonov, head of the Bulgarian airline office in Rome. He remains in custody on suspicion of complicity in the shooting.

The two other Bulgarians, both employees at the Bulgarian Embassy, are in Bulgaria and, like Mr. Antonov, have